

Boundary Waters Trust * Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters * Backcountry Hunters & Anglers National
National Wildlife Federation * Izaak Walton League of America National * American Fly Fishing Trade Association
Fly Fishers International * Keep It Public * American Sportfishing Association * Pope & Young Club
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers MN * Backcountry Hunters & Anglers WI * Backcountry Hunters & Anglers MI
South Dakota Wildlife Federation * Patagonia * Vortex Optics * First Lite * Simms Fishing Products * Ely Outfitting Company
Hungry Jack Outfitters * Tuscarora Lodge & Canoe Outfitters * Outdoor Industry Association * Great Lakes Fly Shop
Namebini * Sage Fly Fishing * Redington * RIO Products * Nautilus Reels * Seek Outside * St. Croix Rods * Scott Fly Rods
Okuma Fishing Tackle Corp. * Rep Your Water * Fishpond Inc. * Mend Provisions * Modern Carnivore
Greenhead Strategies * Full Curl Brand * The Will To Hunt * Smith Optics * Rajeff Sports (ECHO and Airflo)
Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop * Wired To Hunt * Vapor Trail Archery * Action Fly Company * Far Out Fly Fishing
Scientific Anglers * Heather's Choice * Backpackers Pantry * Lifestyle Lost LLC * Wilderness Lite LLC * Alpacka Raft
Hatch Outdoors, Inc. * Island Charters MI * Island View Resort

Thursday, May 31, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretaries Zinke and Perdue,

We, the undersigned community of hunters, anglers, businesses, and conservation organizations, write to express our strong opposition to the Department of Interior's May 2, 2018 action to reinstate two expired mineral leases for Antofagasta's Twin Metals Minnesota. Requests to renew these two leases had been denied by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2016 following a decision by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to withhold its legally-required consent to renewals.

We respectfully request an immediate suspension of all mineral development approvals during an ongoing Forest Service study of a proposed twenty-year mineral withdrawal of 234,328 acres of Superior National Forest lands in the Rainy River Watershed and adjacent to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA). The suspension of mineral development approvals should include a halt to any actions to reinstate or renew mineral leases and all new permits, leases, or other approvals by the BLM and the Forest Service in the Rainy River Watershed.

The Forest Service study commenced in January 2017 and included a two-year segregation of public lands from new mining approvals, including leases, permits, or other approvals by the BLM and the Forest Service. The Forest Service study will be the basis of a decision by Secretary Zinke on the Forest Service's application to withdraw Superior National Forest lands from the mineral leasing program to protect the Boundary Waters and the Superior National Forest from harm inherent in sulfide-ore copper mining. The study is supported by both Secretary Zinke and Secretary Perdue.

Hunters, anglers, and recreational users support the Forest Service's comprehensive, science-based analysis of environmental, economic, and social impacts of the proposed twenty-year withdrawal. This study includes an assessment of the impacts that the inevitable consequences of copper mining, including acid mine drainage, would have on the public lands, fish, and wildlife of the Boundary Waters and downstream lands and waters.

Unfortunately, the recent action by the Department of Interior to reinstate the leases ignores the well-documented objections of the Forest Service in its 2016 decision to withhold consent to renewal of the two mineral leases and in its 2017 application for a twenty-year mineral withdrawal. The reinstatement and any other approvals during the Forest Service study undercuts the study, preempts decision-making based on facts and science, and violates the intent and spirit of the two-year segregation.

The Boundary Waters and the rest of the Superior National Forest are known for excellent water quality. Sulfide-ore copper mining on the edge of the Boundary Waters would cause irreparable harm to the very quality that makes these lands and waters so unique. Acid mine drainage caused by this type of mining would be particularly damaging to the Boundary Waters because of the interconnected lakes, streams, wetlands, and aquifers downstream of the proposed mine sites. This habitat supports world-class recreational fisheries that are sensitive to small changes in the ecosystem. Acid mine drainage lowers pH and exposes fish and other aquatic organisms to heavy metals, like copper, lead, mercury, and nickel.

The Boundary Waters is the most visited Wilderness Area in the nation, and a world-class hunting and fishing destination. Americans have outstanding access to these Wilderness fisheries through 84 entry points that lead to 1,100 lakes and over 2,000 campsites. The three million-acre Superior National Forest, which includes the Boundary Waters, contains twenty percent of all the freshwater in the 193 million-acre National Forest System. Downstream from the Boundary Waters are Voyageurs National Park, Rainy Lake, and Lake of the Woods, which provide some of Minnesota's best hunting and fishing experiences. The Boundary Waters is a public lands and waters success story. It is imperative we defend this Wilderness for future generations.

The Boundary Waters is a major contributor to a robust hunting and fishing economy in Minnesota that provides \$3.17 billion in consumer spending annually and 47,900 direct jobs. The Outdoor Industry Association recently published a study that found 140,000 Minnesotans are employed in outdoor recreation, in no small part because of the Boundary Waters. Any damage to the Boundary Waters, or even the perception that the Wilderness is deteriorating, threatens this outdoor economy. An economic study shows that copper mining in the Rainy River Watershed is likely to destroy 4,490 local jobs in the Boundary Waters region alone.

Our nation's hunting and fishing economy, our sporting traditions, and healthy fish and wildlife populations depend on places like the Boundary Waters.

We call on you to immediately suspend all mineral development approvals on public lands in the Rainy River Watershed during the Forest Service's ongoing study of a mineral withdrawal.

Sincerely,

Boundary Waters Trust (BWT)

Jason Zabokrtsky – Chair
Ely, MN

Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters (SFBW)

Lukas Leaf – National Sporting Director
Minneapolis, MN

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers - National (BHA)

Land Tawney – President & CEO
Missoula, MT

National Wildlife Federation

Mike Leahy - Senior Manager of Public Land Conservation & Sportsmen Policy
Merrifield, VA

Izaak Walton League of America - National

Jared Mott - Conservation Director
Gaithersburg, MD

American Fly Fishing Trade Association (AFFTA)

Ben Bulis - President & CEO
Bozeman, MT

Fly Fishers International

Dave Peterson – Chair, Conservation Committee
Livingston, MT

Keep It Public

Greg Blascovich – President
Palo Alto, CA

American Sportfishing Association

Scott Gudes – Vice President of Government Affairs
Alexandria, VA

Pope & Young Club

Doug Clayton - Conservation Chair
Chatfield, MN

Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.)

Gene Gilliland - Conservation Director
Birmingham, AL

MN Chapter Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Aaron Hebeisen & Erik Jensen – Co-chairs
Mora, MN

WI Chapter Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Jeff Guerard – Chair

Colgate, WI

MI Chapter Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Drew YoungeDyke - Chair

Ann Arbor, MI

South Dakota Wildlife Federation

Chris Helsa – Executive Director

Pierre, SD

Patagonia

Corley Kenna - Director of Global Communications & Public Relations

Ventura, CA

Vortex Optics

Mark Boardman – Marketing Director

Middleton, WI

First Lite

Ryan Callaghan – Director of Conservation and Public Relations

Ketchum, Idaho

Simms Fishing Products

K.C. Walsh – Executive Chairman, Casey Sheahan – CEO

Bozeman, MT

Ely Outfitting Company

Jason Zabokrtsky - Owner

Ely, MN

Hungry Jack Outfitters

Dave & Nancy Seaton - Owners

Grand Marais, MN (Gunflint Trail)

Tuscarora Lodge & Canoe Outfitters

Andy McDonnell - Owner

Grand Marais, MN (Gunflint Trail)

Outdoor Industry Association

Amy Roberts - Executive Director

Washington D.C.

Great Lakes Fly Shop

John Fehnel - Owner

Duluth, MN

Namebini

Carl Haensel – Owner
Duluth, MN

Sage Fly Fishing

Tag Kleiner - Vice President of Marketing
Bainbridge Island, WA

Redington

Tag Kleiner – Vice President of Marketing
Bainbridge Island, WA

RIO Products

Tag Kleiner – Vice President of Marketing
Idaho Falls, ID

Nautilus Reels

Kristen Mustad – CEO
Miami, Florida

Seek Outside

Kevin Timm – President
Grand Junction, CO

St. Croix Rods

Paul Schluter – President
Park Falls, WI

Scott Fly Rods

Jim Bartschi - President
Montrose, CO

Okuma Fishing Tackle Corp.

Doug Lasko - President
Ontario, CA

Rep Your Water

Garrison & Corinne Doctor - Owners
Erie, CO

Fishpond, Inc.

Ben Kurtz - President
Denver, CO

Mend Provisions

Michael Fischer – Owner
Minneapolis, MN

Modern Carnivore

Mark Norquist – Owner
Minnetonka, MN

Greenhead Strategies

Mark Norquist – Owner
Minnetonka, MN

Full Curl Brand

Will Jenkins – Owner
Hudson, WI

The Will To Hunt

Will Jenkins – CEO & Founder
Hudson, WI

Smith Optics

Peter Crow - Sales Manager / Smith Fishing
Portland, OR

Rajeff Sports (ECHO and Airflo)

Tim Rajeff - Co-Owner
Vancouver, WA

Bob Mitchell's Fly Shop

Robert Hawkins - Owner
St. Paul, MN

Wired To Hunt

Mark Kenyon - CEO & Founder
Hillsdale, MI

Vapor Trail Archery

Stevie Fondie – Owner
Andover, MN

Action Fly Company

Adam Jackson - Owner
Laporte, MN

Far Out Fly Fishing

Brian Porter - Owner
Duluth, MN

Scientific Anglers

John Van Fleet – Marketing Manager
Midland, MI

Heather's Choice

Brad Hund
Anchorage, AK

Backpackers Pantry
Rodney Smith - Owner
Boulder, CO

Lifestyle Lost LLC
Dustin Nichols - Co-Owner & Operator
Michigan

Wilderness Lite LLC
Phil Hayes - Owner
Maurice, IA

Hatch Outdoors, Inc.
John Torok - President & CEO
Vista, CA

Alpacka Raft
Thor Tingey - Owner
Mancos, CO

Island Charters MI
Greg Lipple - Owner
Cedarville, MI

Island View Resort
Jeff Lipple - Owner
Cedarville, MI

Cc: Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt
Associate Deputy Interior Secretary Jim Cason
Assistant Interior Secretary Joe Balash
Special Advisor Kathy Benedetto
Acting Eastern States Director Mitch Leverette
Special Advisor Brian Klippenstein
Acting USDA Deputy Under Secretary Dan Jiron
Interem Forest Service Chief Vicki Christiansen
Regional Forester Kathleen Atkinson
Superior National Forest Supervisor Connie Cummins